



FIRST THINGS FIRST

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Date of Submission: February 6, 2009
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Huge State Deficit Could Mean Decreased Services for Young Children

The state of Arizona is ~~facing a \$1.6 billion deficit for fiscal year 2009 and~~ is projecting a \$3.01 billion shortfall for the ~~following 2010~~ fiscal year. As a result, the Arizona State Legislature is faced with the difficult task of determining how to balance the State's budget. This means that the Legislature is currently analyzing all State programs to determine where cuts can be made and how large those cuts will be.

The Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC) recently made recommendations to the Legislative Budget Committee~~s~~ on exactly how programs should be cut and what potential impact that would have on the programs. Specifically, in addition to many other program cuts, the JLBC has recommended cuts to AHCCCS, Department of Economic Security, Department of Health Services and the Department of Housing. ~~All Many~~ of these recommendations ~~have been made for the 2009 FY budget.. They would~~ have a direct impact on the services that children in the community receive.

~~For example, the proposed budget cuts under AHCCCS would eliminate the KidsCare Children Program for fiscal year 2009 resulting in an \$18.3 million cut. Under this proposal, 62,638 children would be without any form of health insurance. Under the Department of Economic Security, the JLBC recommends reducing child care funding by \$8.1 million, autism services by \$958,300 and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) caseload growth by \$993,100. Additionally, the JLBC is recommending that the State cut funding to Children's Behavioral Health Services and has reallocated \$7 million in earned interest from First Things First (Early Childhood Development and Health Board)-) was reverted to the General Fund for fiscal year 2009. Because the legislature cut large amounts from agency budgets, each agency will have to make the decision as to where the budget cuts will be made. The agencies are in the process of deciding in conjunction with the Governor's office where these cuts will be made.~~

At the end of the day, not only children in our community but children Statewide would be impacted by the actual and -proposed budget cuts. ~~If the proposed budget cuts are implemented,~~ Apache children ~~would may~~ have less access to medical care and behavioral health services, as well as reduced access to

early childhood and development services. Families relying on any type of assistance ~~would~~ may be less able to provide for the children in their care.

If community members are concerned about the proposed budget cuts and the impact they could have in Native communities, they may wish to contact their elected officials to voice their concerns. You can find the contact information for your State Representative by going to this link (<http://www.azleg.gov/alisStaticPages/HowToContactMember.asp>) and completing a search.

Should you have any questions or would like more information about First Things First, please feel free to contact Rochelle Lacapa at (928) 532-5041 or via email at rlacapa@azftf.gov.